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Preparing for peace: An analysis of Darfur, Sudan

Margie Buchanan-Smith and Brendan Bromwich

Narratives that attempt to explain the conflict in Darfur primarily as a natural resource-based conflict are simplistic and misleading. Although competition over access to land and other natural resources is a major fault line at the local level, the conflict has to be understood in terms of wider political agendas that have manipulated those local tensions in the absence of a functional system of governance. This chapter argues for a three-level analysis of the conflict: local, national, and regional (incorporating neighboring countries).

There have been various attempts to resolve the decade-long conflict, but none has yet been successful. Darfur has thus become the scene of a protracted crisis in which the conflict dynamics have become entrenched, as have some of the negative long-term impacts, such as those on the environment and livelihoods. Should one wait until there is a peace agreement before addressing issues of natural resource management and before attempting to reverse environmental degradation? This chapter argues that doing so would be disastrous, and that humanitarian programming to meet immediate emergencies can be extended to address some of these longer-term issues and thereby help put in place the foundations for sustainable and peaceful natural resource management in Darfur in the future.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the complexity of the Darfur conflict, arguing that it cannot be reduced to a single theory of competition over natural resources. It then introduces a livelihoods framework to explain the connections between the conflict, environmental degradation, and livelihoods. The next section explains how long-term processes of environmental degradation have accelerated and are associated with rapid and distorted processes of urbanization and the struggle for livelihoods in a contracting economy. The following section

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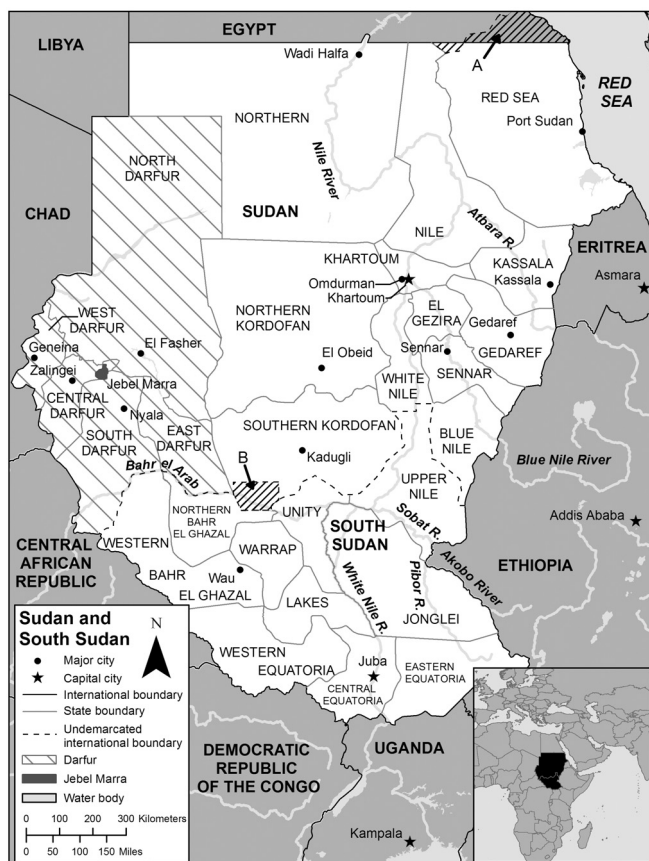
reveals the limitations of the international humanitarian effort so far in engaging with, and attempting to reverse, some of these devastating trends. The chapter then reflects on attempts at building peace in Darfur and draws out some of the lessons for future peacebuilding efforts, arguing that until there is resolution to the conflict a dual approach to humanitarianism is necessary—an approach that responds simultaneously to short-term needs and engages with longer-term transitions. The chapter concludes by summarizing how the lessons learned from Darfur are relevant to other conflicts and peacebuilding efforts.

DARFUR: A COMPLEX PROBLEM

The environment of the vast region of Darfur is Sahelian—semi-arid on the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert.¹ Although this environment appears harsh and inhospitable, Darfuri livelihoods of pastoralism and agro-pastoralism had adapted remarkably well to these conditions for centuries. During the twentieth century, however, Darfur's fragile balance of the environment and livelihoods was challenged by a number of changes. First, expansion of cultivation posed a direct threat to pastoralist migration routes in a region where land rights were unevenly distributed and hotly contested (Tubiana 2007). Second, there was a weakening of natural resource governance to address these issues and the resulting competition for access to natural resources between various ethnic and livelihood groups at the local level (Morton 1994; Abdul-Jalil, Mohammed, and Yousuf 2007). Third, although the state of Sudan experienced unprecedented wealth since the discovery of oil in the latter part of the twentieth century, this wealth has been unevenly distributed and has not broken the pattern of under-investment in and marginalization of Darfur (and other peripheral areas of Sudan) that dates back to colonial times. The consequences have been very low rates of economic growth and development in Darfur since at least the 1980s, forcing the growing population to remain heavily dependent on rural livelihoods and to compete for the natural resource base.

These harsh facts about Darfur make it clear that any one-dimensional explanation of the current conflict is inadequate. For example, much of the debate over the role of the environment in the Darfur conflict has been unhelpfully simplistic. At worst, it has been portrayed as a Malthusian narrative of an increasing population facing an encroaching desert without reference to issues of governance or to the wider political dimensions of the conflict. While it is tempting to point out that sixteen of the twenty driest years on record in El Fasher (the capital of North Darfur State) have occurred since 1972 (Tearfund 2007a), the fact that the

¹ In Darfur, the far northern area where rainfall is less than 50 millimeters (mm) per year is uninhabited. Toward central Darfur, rainfall increases to 200 to 500 mm. The mountains of Jebel Marra in the western central region of Darfur break this pattern with rainfall up to 800 mm (and elevation up to 3,000 meters). Farther south, the population density increases, and the rainfall per year reaches approximately 800 mm.



Notes:

A – The Hala'ib Triangle, claimed by Sudan and de facto administered by Egypt.

B – The disputed Abyei area; shaded area depicts the Abyei area as proposed by the government of Sudan.

C – The Ilemi Triangle, claimed by Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Kenya and de facto controlled by Kenya.

current conflict has taken place in years of above-average rainfall in Darfur has been conveniently overlooked² (Bromwich 2009). This simplistic environmental narrative also makes it difficult to explain why the fighting has reached N'Djamena in Chad and Omdurman in central Sudan. Instead, a full understanding of the conflict must take into account the complexity and interconnectedness of the different factors and agendas at play.

A more sophisticated analysis of the complexity of the conflict acknowledges the overarching political dimension and how access to natural resources has been manipulated at the local level as part of that broader political struggle (de Waal 2007). One approach to explain the complexity is to consider three different

² See, for example, Kevane and Gray (2008).

levels of the conflict: local, national, and regional (Young et al. 2005). At the local level, the conflict is taking place between different ethnic groups or groups with different livelihood strategies, each competing for power and access to natural resources. At the national level, the conflict is between Darfuri rebel groups and the political leadership of the federal government in Khartoum. This level reveals long-term inequalities between the center and the periphery, and the concentration of political power by ruling elites in the center.³ At the wider regional level, the conflict involves Sudan's neighboring countries, especially Chad. Struggles for political power in Khartoum and in N'Djamena are closely intertwined, with the respective governments of Sudan and Chad frequently supporting rebel movements in the other country.⁴

How these three levels interact is critical to understanding current events in Darfur and the role of natural resources in the conflict dynamics. Competition between different ethnic and livelihood groups over natural resources, and especially land, has long been a source of tension in Darfur. In the current conflict, this has become a major fault line at the local level, exploited by political agendas at the national and regional levels. For example, the Khartoum government has exploited the land issue by manipulating the long-term grievances of ethnic groups without their own *dar*, or tribal land (Tubiana 2007).⁵

UNDERSTANDING DARFUR: THE ADAPTED LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

This chapter employs the adapted livelihoods framework to explain how the conflict in Darfur has exacerbated environmental degradation and what this means for humanitarian programming and for peacebuilding. The key implication of the framework is that humanitarian programming, which is initially aimed at immediate life-threatening crises, can be linked to long-term programming that supports livelihood development and peacebuilding.

The adapted livelihoods framework illustrated in figure 1 provides an analytical tool for understanding how natural resource management is inextricably linked to conflict dynamics (Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2006).⁶ One of the most important

³ According to Alex de Waal, this was also a major factor in the long-running civil war between northern and southern Sudan, prior to South Sudan's secession (de Waal 2007).

⁴ The Central African Republic and Libya have also been involved in the conflict. The regional dynamics are particularly clear when the political analysis is extended back to the 1960s. See, for example, Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti (2009) and Marchal (2007).

⁵ This is how the northern Rizeygat, without their own *dar*, came to supply much of the Janjaweed militia in the early years of the conflict (Young et al. 2009).

⁶ This framework was adapted by Tufts University for complex humanitarian emergencies. It has been effectively applied during the conflict in Darfur in a series of workshops designed to sharpen the strategic focus of livelihoods programming during the crisis (Young et al. 2007). Not only did this version of the livelihoods framework facilitate communication and contributions across disciplines, it also provided a neutral vehicle for discussing the impacts of sensitive political issues, for example, the militarization of pastoralist youth as a livelihood strategy.

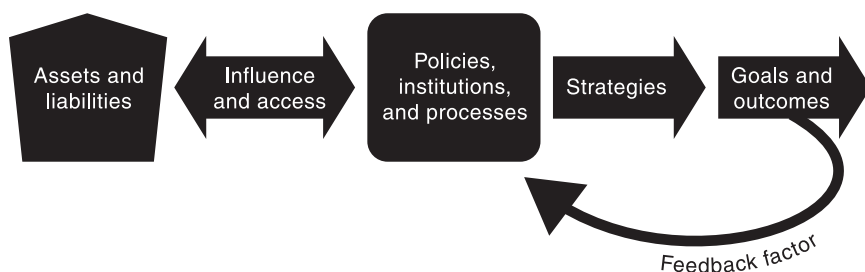


Figure 1. Adapted livelihoods framework for complex humanitarian emergencies

Source: Adapted from Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2006).

contributions of the framework is the distinction between assets and policies, institutions, and processes (PIPs), as well as the connection between them.

Assets fall into one of the following six categories: (1) natural (for example, water and pasture); (2) physical (capital used for production, such as livestock and agricultural tools); (3) human (the capability of household members); (4) financial (measures of wealth); (5) social (social capital, including networks of reciprocal social obligations); and (6) political (meaning political capital). While assets influence the strategies that households are able to pursue, they are also influenced by prevailing PIPs. For example, taxation policy will affect the return a household receives from selling some of its produce. In a conflict setting, whether the institution of the market is functioning, which is at least partially dependent on conflict processes, will also influence how the household uses its assets. Thus the feedback loop helps to understand how the PIPs influence access to assets, and also the final value or quality of assets (Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2006).

This distinction—between assets and PIPs—encourages a more accurate analysis of the impacts of the conflict on livelihoods and the environment, a better understanding of peoples’ choices of livelihood strategies, and a framework for designing more appropriate programs. Sue Lautze and Angela Raven-Roberts explain that “the utility of assets is mediated through the governance environment of the many layers of different societies’ formal and informal policies, institutions and processes” (Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2006, 393).

Assets, especially physical assets, tend to receive more attention in humanitarian programming than PIPs, although it may be the PIPs that are the critical factor affecting a household’s ability to use its assets. For example, in Darfur, an ethnic group with its own dar may have a clear sense of the geographical demarcation of its natural resource base (such as grazing and water resources). Sharing of those natural resources within the group is mediated through the tribal leaders, who also play a key role in negotiating access by other ethnic and livelihood groups to grazing and water resources. Whether such negotiations will prove to be secure, however, depends on two factors: first, whether the negotiations are formally recognized by the wider policy framework that governs natural resource management within Sudan; second, whether the negotiations can avoid being severely disrupted by violence—when, for example, a competing ethnic

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group tries to force access to key grazing resources through the power of the gun. Thus, conflict between different livelihood groups is also captured by the PIPs box in figure 1.

An important contribution of the adapted livelihoods framework is how it posits that some forms of vulnerability within the livelihood system are endogenous—that livelihood assets may also be liabilities.⁷ For example, in Darfur, ownership of cattle, a valuable asset, can expose an individual or household to increased risk of attack or looting. Similarly, violent conflict should not be viewed as being external to PIPs, but is better understood in terms of its various forms: violence as process; violence as institution; and violence as policy. An example of violence as policy was the government of Sudan's counterinsurgency strategy in response to the 2003 Darfur rebellion.

PROCESSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION DURING THE DARFUR CONFLICT, 2003–2009

The onset of the Darfur conflict had two disastrous effects on the region, both of which have long-term implications and will only be solved by long-term planning. First, the conflict destroyed the last vestiges of effective natural resource management, which had eroded in previous decades as a result of weakening local governance. Second, the violence has caused massive population displacement and unprecedented migration to cities, severely straining the environment around the urban areas.

Erosion of natural resource management in Darfur

Historically, natural resource management in Darfur was rooted in traditional leadership structures, originating in the Fur Sultanate that ruled western Darfur until the late nineteenth century. These structures were codified in the colonial era (beginning in 1916) as a system of native administration. According to Musa Abdul-Jalil, Adam Mohammed, and Ahmed Yousuf, “For more than half a century the native administration provided a system of local governance that managed the use of natural resources and allowed various groups to live in relative peace and stability” (Abdul-Jalil, Mohammed, and Yousuf 2007). Traditional leaders were primarily responsible for maintaining law and order within their particular identity or ethnic group. In addition to settling disputes, they were also responsible for protecting the environment upon which livelihoods depended.

For the last fifty years, however, the story in Darfur has been very different. Local governance has been in a constant state of flux. For short periods, the native administration, a key part of local governance, has been disbanded completely—for example, in 1971 under President Gaafar Nimeiry—and then

⁷ This is one of the key distinctions between the adapted livelihoods framework used in this chapter and the sustainable livelihoods framework used in development contexts; the latter framework tends to regard vulnerability as exogenous to the livelihood system.

reinstated. Over longer periods, the native administration has become heavily politicized, usually serving the interests of the central government rather than the interests of local communities. Administrative boundaries have been redrawn a number of times, most controversially in 1995 when Darfur was divided into three states. This move, which split the Fur heartland among the three states, was contested by many Darfuris, who perceived it as weakening the social integrity of the region. As a consequence of these trends, there has been a gradual weakening of both traditional leadership structures and of formal local governance structures. This, in turn, has degraded the mechanisms and processes for sustainable and equitable management of natural resources (Curtis and Scoones 1990).

The violent conflict in Darfur since 2003 has sounded the death knell for functioning environmental governance. At the local level, the conflict has been fought along ethnic lines (partly relating to different livelihood groups), heavily manipulated by counterinsurgency tactics employed by the central government in Khartoum. The counterinsurgency tactics have involved the arming of certain groups—for example, the northern Rizeygat, who have particular grievances about their lack of tribal land rights and who have been closely associated with the notorious Janjaweed militia. As the social fabric of Darfur has been torn apart, the impact on natural resource management in most parts of the region has been devastating. Control over natural resources is now determined more by the gun than by policy, government institutions, or negotiated agreements. This is evident in areas such as Kabkabiya, a district of North Darfur State, and in parts of West Darfur State and South Darfur State, where armed pastoralist groups have become *de facto* custodians of the bush. Internally displaced persons (IDPs), urban and rural residents, and traders—to ensure their protection when traveling to collect firewood—must pay these armed groups (UNEP 2008a). This is exacerbated by the fact that the national government has a very limited presence outside most of the main government-held towns in Darfur. For example, the Forestry National Corporation (FNC), the main national government agency responsible for setting and implementing policy related to the production, management, and trade of timber, has lost access to large swaths of rural Darfur, including its own plantations and reserves.

Not surprisingly, the incidence of conflict over natural resources increased as local governance deteriorated. Although it is tempting to describe the increase in violence in Malthusian terms—increasing competition over natural resources as Darfur's population grew against the backdrop of the increasing frequency of drought—this explanation is too simplistic; the failure of governance and the weakening of local institutions have been key factors.

Accelerated urbanization and economic contraction: Effect on the environment

As natural resource management has broken down, Darfur's human geography has also changed irrevocably during a decade of conflict. One of the most dramatic consequences of the conflict has been the accelerated and distorted process of urbanization affecting all major towns (Buchanan-Smith and McElhinney

2011). This process is principally a result of the massive displacement and upheaval that has been a feature of the conflict from the beginning, affecting some 2 million people. Large camps with up to 70,000 IDPs about many of Darfur's towns, in addition to the displaced people that live with relatives or independently inside the towns. The additional presence of the international community (aid organizations and thousands of peacekeepers) has swollen the town populations further. Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State, grew approximately 2.5 times in size since the conflict began in 2003 to approximately 1.3 million people (including IDPs) in 2008, becoming Sudan's third largest urban center.⁸ The evidence from other areas in Sudan (including areas that are now in South Sudan)—including Khartoum, Juba, and other towns in southern Sudan⁹—illustrates how large-scale conflict-related displacement can soon produce long-term unplanned urban settlements, even after peace is restored (Pantuliano et al. 2008).

At the same time, there has been a substantial contraction of Darfur's economy. Many rural livelihoods have collapsed as entire villages have been abandoned and as pastoralists are no longer able to follow migration routes to critical grazing areas (Young et al. 2009). Trade in all of Darfur's main agricultural and livestock products has been badly affected as production has declined and trade routes have closed or become highly insecure, causing transport and transaction costs to soar (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul 2008). As a consequence, growing numbers of people have been turning to the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources as the source of their livelihoods. What used to be a coping strategy for rural households in times of stress—collecting and selling firewood during drought years—has become a means of adaptation for almost all groups, from displaced farmers to pastoralists. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported that even traders who used to buy and sell other commodities have become traders of timber, firewood, and charcoal (UNEP 2008a).

The negative impacts of these unsustainable coping strategies have been magnified by the construction boom that has accompanied the accelerated urbanization of Darfur. Between 2003 and 2008, urban rents increased between four times (in Nyala) and sixteen times (in Zalingei), fuelled by the unprecedented presence of the international community (UNEP 2008a). Investment in property has become one of the most secure forms of capital, with potentially high returns in an otherwise contracting economy. Brick making has increased to four or five times the pre-conflict level, and fuel for kilns (often greenwood) has become the most significant driver of deforestation, followed by timber for construction. The increasing distances that IDPs and urban residents have to travel to find firewood, whether for cooking or for sale, are alarming. For example, IDPs from Kalma camp outside Nyala once travelled about 15 kilometers to collect firewood; by 2008,

⁸ In the 2008 census, Nyala's population was set at 750,000. But there were many problems with the census in Darfur, and the Ministry of Urban Planning estimated the city's population of Nyala to be closer to 1.3 million (Buchanan-Smith and McElhinney 2011).

⁹ In this chapter, *southern Sudan* refers to the southern area of Sudan, prior to the secession of South Sudan.

they had to travel up to 75 kilometers. In North Darfur State, the situation had become even more critical: in 2008 IDPs reported travelling up to a week to collect a donkey cart load of firewood fuel. The conflict has also inflicted severe damage on the forest reserves managed by the FNC, which has very limited ability to access areas outside Darfur's main towns. In West Darfur State, the FNC reported in 2008 that five of their reserves had lost their entire tree cover and another two had lost 50 percent of their tree cover.

The rapid process of urbanization has also placed unprecedented stress on water resources in urban areas, most notably in Nyala and in El Fasher, two towns with limited aquifers and poor water resources.¹⁰ One IDP camp on the edge of Nyala experienced a drop in groundwater levels of approximately seven meters over an eighteen-month period and is one of two camps that now need piped supplies following exhaustion of the aquifer. Studies undertaken by UNEP, building on work by Tearfund, identified twenty-three IDP camps across Darfur potentially at risk from groundwater depletion, representing what was approximately 40 percent of the IDP population at the time (UNEP 2008b; Tearfund 2007b).

Darfur's vulnerability to drought has escalated in the conflict years, not just because of the unplanned and unprecedented demand for resources, but also because drought has occurred as structures of government have weakened or become nonexistent and the mobility of people and livestock has become limited. At its peak, the large-scale food aid operation in response to the conflict provided Darfur with an unprecedented safety net that could alleviate the impact of a severe drought year, as experienced in 2009. By 2014, however, food aid levels were declining and this safety net had weakened. At the same time, limited mobility and heavy concentrations of people and livestock have put much greater pressure on water and grazing resources than in pre-conflict drought years.

THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

As the extent of the violence and displacement in Darfur became apparent in 2003 and 2004, international humanitarian aid agencies mobilized assistance on a massive scale. Darfur became the recipient of the world's largest food aid operation, run by the World Food Programme. Initially, the focus was on immediate life-saving needs, particularly in response to the rapid and large-scale displacement. By the end of 2004, the emergency aid program was more or less in place, involving hundreds of organizations. It is to the credit of the international humanitarian community and many local organizations that the provision of water, sanitation, and health services to IDP camps and some rural areas helped to contain some aspects of Darfur's humanitarian crisis. Additionally, the provision

¹⁰ Like many of the more populated areas of central Darfur, these cities lie on basement complex geology. This geology includes rocks such as schists, gneisses, and granites, which have little potential for storing water. Other towns, such as Geneina, lie on more water-rich sandstone (Tearfund 2007b).

of food aid contained malnutrition and worked as an income transfer for a number of years, although food aid levels have since declined.¹¹

The thinking and approaches that characterized the beginning of the relief operation, however, have persisted. Although some humanitarian organizations began in 2005 to consider how they could go beyond emergency relief to support livelihoods even as the humanitarian crisis continued, it would be another two years before these kinds of interventions attracted widespread interest, funding, and programming.¹²

Almost a decade into the conflict the international effort was still focused on meeting immediate needs through the provision of relief items, usually physical assets. It has been less successful in addressing the broader challenges. For example, Darfur abstracted unprecedented amounts of groundwater water for its vast new centers of populations, but for the first three years there was no monitoring of the impact on aquifers. Fortunately, Darfur has enjoyed several years of good rainfall since the conflict began, but recurrent drought is a fact of life for this Sahelian region, and the rains in 2009 were poor in North Darfur State. Few agencies had built any kind of drought preparedness protocol into their humanitarian and relief plans, and thus in 2009 they had to monitor the situation and adapt their responses in real time rather than in advance.¹³

International agencies have built thousands of new shelters, latrines, and other buildings in IDP camps. But much of it has been done without considering the impacts on the environment from the heavily inflated demand for timber, and in the absence of a functioning system for managing natural resources. Environmental assessments have been absent from camp management strategies. Despite the pioneering work in developing international best practices in community environmental action plans (CEAPs) for refugee camp management in eastern Sudan, the first systematic attempt to promote CEAPs in Darfur did not start until seven years into the conflict. Above all, there has been remarkably little engagement in addressing Darfur's settlement patterns, which are changing with the rapid and unplanned process of urbanization.¹⁴

¹¹ An *income transfer*, in this context, means that the food aid is sold by the household for much-needed cash.

¹² Growing interest in livelihoods programming was evident in the series of workshops facilitated by Tufts University in Darfur in July 2007, which brought together more than 180 local and international actors from local government, civil society, and international agencies (Young et al. 2007). For a first-hand perspective on the importance of humanitarian assistance extending to longer-term livelihood provision, see Egeland (2015).

¹³ In 2008, UNEP published "Water Resource Management in Humanitarian Programming in Darfur: The Case for Drought Preparedness" in an effort to avoid such an oversight (UNEP 2008b).

¹⁴ The Chinese government has been most engaged with the Darfur Regional Authority (previously, the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority) in addressing the major works that are required due to urbanization. Other organizations have been much slower to address the urbanization process.

Why have international humanitarian aid organizations failed to engage with these critical trends (many of which would be within the PIPs box in figure 1) and to target their responses to the wider context within which they are operating? The reasons are not unique to Darfur and can best be explained by examining the prevailing humanitarian paradigm.

First, planning and implementing humanitarian programs are strongly needs oriented, designed to provide physical assets to those most affected by the crisis by replacing the assets they have lost (for example, the distribution of food aid and of nonfood items). Much less attention is paid to the PIPs that may have caused the loss of assets, or that may be affected by how relief is provided and the emergency is contained. Little attention has been paid, in Darfur, to the deforestation and environmental degradation processes that have accelerated around the main towns and the reasons for it, which include a construction boom fueled by the presence of the international community and the breakdown of institutions and systems for managing natural resources. A predominantly needs-oriented approach has also meant that assessments focus almost entirely on demand, such as demand for water within IDP camps, and on how to meet international humanitarian standards, such as standards set by the Sphere Project,¹⁵ without paying sufficient attention to whether there are sufficient water resources to meet that demand year after year while the conflict continues.

Second, even in chronic crises, the planning and funding horizons for humanitarian action are short-term, rarely more than a year, and there is little strategic planning. The multilateral Common Humanitarian Fund in Sudan, for example, operates on a one-year time frame, as does the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. The European Community Humanitarian Aid Office—now the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission—once used the same timeline but extended its funding timescale for Darfur to eighteen months in the mid-2000s (Collinson, Buchanan-Smith, and Elhawary 2009). These short time frames are a disincentive to identify and monitor longer trends related to PIPs—such as the unplanned process of urbanization, or the impact of IDP camps and numerous new boreholes on water sources—and to respond to them with long-term policy solutions.

Third, most of the frontline humanitarian work is carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating within defined geographic areas. In a context as logistically and politically challenging as Darfur's, this has been a pragmatic response, but it can result in a fragmented and disaggregated approach to planning and programming that tends to focus on assets and fails to engage with long-term processes and trends. The role of UN agencies is critical in providing the strategic overview as well as practical coordination. This should

¹⁵ The Sphere Project recommends a minimum of fifteen liters of water per person per day to meet basic water needs (Sphere Project 2011).

have happened in Darfur through the UN Work Plan (to which many NGOs subscribe) and the Common Humanitarian Fund. But in practice, the potential to analyze and maintain a perspective on the bigger picture and to develop a long-term strategy has been slow to be realized, and the Common Humanitarian Fund has tended to be a gap-filling mechanism (Willitts-King, Mowjee, and Barham 2007).¹⁶

Fourth, some key areas of technical expertise are weak or missing in the international humanitarian community's repertoire of skills, militating against the likelihood of long-term transitions and issues being monitored or taken on board. In Darfur, one of the gaps has been hydrogeological analysis, which partly explains the absence of groundwater monitoring until 2007 despite the context of water scarcity. Instead, there have been high levels of attention to issues such as community management of water projects, indicative of a bias toward social concerns within international humanitarian agencies, which seems to have occurred at the expense of some important technical skills.

Fifth, and as a consequence of all the above, the international humanitarian system has not been good at identifying or addressing the externalities associated with its programming. Humanitarian organizations have, for example, generally failed to consider how the provision of shelter materials (plastic sheeting that requires wood to support it) and the presence of so many aid agencies and staff have fueled a construction boom that has had a devastating impact on Darfur's forest resources.

The consequences of this needs-oriented and short-term approach to humanitarian assistance have been particularly serious in Darfur because of the fragility of the balance between natural resources and human activity. As soon as one shifts sight from the immediate needs to Darfur's long-term future, it becomes apparent that fundamental changes are taking place that must be addressed with long-term strategies. In the words of an experienced Darfuri environmentalist, "If we don't respond to environmental degradation now, there will be no environment for Darfur's future."¹⁷

Some of these limitations of the prevailing humanitarian paradigm have long been recognized, especially in relation to chronic and protracted crises like Darfur's. For over a decade, the linking of relief, rehabilitation, and development has been widely debated, usually focusing on the somewhat artificial distinctions between these three different types of programming, whether they can be carried out consecutively or concurrently, and how to ease the transition from one phase to another.¹⁸

¹⁶ Moves to disaggregate sector or cluster coordination from agency program implementation (as in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector) are to be applauded. However, more could have been done to ensure that detailed contextual analysis and appropriate consultation fed into the development of sector strategy.

¹⁷ Personal communication with authors.

¹⁸ For an overview of the debate, see Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri (2005).

Clearly, environmentally insensitive programming can undermine livelihoods by destroying natural resources. Less visible are the ways in which the provision of humanitarian assistance can support or hinder relationships between different ethnic and livelihood groups, especially in a context as politically charged as Darfur's. Such programming can affect how groups work together—such as whether they have positive or negative impacts on traditional processes for managing natural resources. For example, the international humanitarian community has been slow to engage with pastoralist *abbala* (camel herding) groups, which have tended to be demonized as members of the Janjaweed, although research has revealed high levels of vulnerability within the *abbala* communities (Young et al. 2009). The partiality of the international humanitarian community in ignoring this group has been challenged, pointing out how it has further marginalized a group that is key to eventually finding a peaceful resolution to Darfur's conflict.

On the more positive side, some agencies such as CARE and the Danish Refugee Council have worked with great sensitivity to bring together different livelihood and ethnic groups (see box). These are examples of how humanitarian assistance can be provided to meet short-term needs while at the same time building collaboration between livelihood groups that is essential for Darfur's ability to adapt to the impacts of population growth, changing settlement patterns, and conflict. And in 2010, the United Nations provided greater strategic leadership in *Beyond Emergency Relief*—a publication that identifies long-term trends and priorities for UN agencies in Darfur (UN 2010).

Peacebuilding by CARE International*

CARE International developed an approach to integrate peacebuilding into its rural programming that produced impressive results in the Kass area in the northwestern corner of South Darfur State. CARE formed village development committees (VDCs) comprising members of conflicting communities in an area. When these committees were established, the interaction between committee members facilitated a locally owned process of reinvigorating local peace committees, many of which predated the conflict, and on which the same delegates often sat. Two features of the approach were particularly striking: First, the VDCs often took more than a year to form before substantive programming could be implemented through them (but this investment was part of the peacebuilding process). Second, CARE did not try to work directly with the locally owned peace committees until the VDCs were formed, at which point training was provided for the peace committees. The success of this approach became evident when peace committees in neighboring areas started to meet, creating collective fora for dialogue. In conflict-affected situations where relationships of trust have been destroyed, the trust that nongovernmental organizations develop with and between local communities is important social capital that can lay the foundation for commencing the work of brokering agreements and rebuilding social fabric. These steps also help to rebuild mechanisms for natural resource management and conflict prevention in the future.

* See UNEP (2008c).

PREPARING FOR PEACE: LEARNING FROM RECENT EXPERIENCE IN DARFUR AND SOUTHERN SUDAN

Ending the conflict in Darfur and laying the groundwork for the region's development is an imposing task. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to forge peace. It is important to understand why they failed and how an agreement might succeed. The agreement that ended the north-south conflict in Sudan, after many years of negotiation and failures, provides some guidelines that could apply in Darfur. Several years of experience in Darfur also has implications for the humanitarian organizations there—specifically the challenge to transition from emergency relief to programming that supports secure and sustainable livelihoods.

Attempts to build peace in Darfur

There have been a number of international attempts to end the violence and forge a peace agreement in Darfur. The first serious attempt took place in Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2006, with the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) by the Government of National Unity and the largest of the three major rebel movements at the time (Minni Minnawi's faction of the Sudan Liberation Army). However, the fact that two key rebel movements (Abdel Wahid's faction of the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement) were not signatories exacerbated the conflict in Darfur in the following months. There was no peace, and the rebel movements subsequently fractured and multiplied. In 2007, the United Nations and the African Union launched another attempt at peace negotiations in Sirte, Libya, but the turnout was poor and the negotiations were aborted. More recently, the second Darfur peace agreement, known as the Doha Agreement, was signed in July 2011 between the government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement, but is struggling to make a difference at the time of writing.

Forging a workable peace agreement is a high-risk activity; several common factors have undermined the success of the peace efforts in Darfur. First, efforts have tended to be top-down approaches and have focused principally on the international and national levels, with much less engagement at the local level.¹⁹ Yet, the conflict in Darfur has to be understood in terms of the interactions between the international, national, and local levels.

Second, efforts to reach a peace agreement in Darfur appeared at times to have been driven more by international political agendas—for example, the need in Washington, D.C., or London to deliver a peace agreement—rather than one that reflects the reality on the ground. This was the case for the DPA in 2006, which was characterized as “deadline diplomacy” (Nathan 2006, 5). Building the foundations for peace at the local level is a slow and painstaking business in Darfur, involving traditional leaders as well as new leaders who have emerged

¹⁹ See UNEP (2014a).

during the conflict (UNEP 2014a). Instead, efforts have been mostly directed at the high-profile political leaders of different movements and factions.

Third, one of the shortcomings of the 2006 DPA was its failure to address the land issues that are at the heart of the conflict—including land tenure, grazing, and water rights—as well as issues of local governance. By simply reaffirming land rights associated with the *hakura*, land that was originally allocated to particular clans or tribal groups by the colonial authorities, the DPA unhelpfully reasserted the pre-conflict status quo and failed to address one of the major sources of conflict at the local level—the tensions between those with *hakura* and those without. After the signing of the DPA, in 2006, these issues were passed onto the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation process (DDDC), set up by the DPA and intended to give Darfuris a voice in the peace and reconciliation process. The DDDC has indeed consulted on land issues within Darfur, but there has been little progress toward resolution.²⁰ There has been a tendency in Sudan to set up processes for addressing land issues as part of the peace agreement, but it is now clear that these issues must be central to the peace negotiations themselves, and clearly addressed in the ensuing agreement (Egemi 2006). Although it is sometimes claimed that including land and other natural resource issues in the peace process slows it down and risks the political interests of the dominant negotiating partners, Sudan's experience shows that deferring these issues can result in protracted conflict.²¹

Learning from peacebuilding in southern Sudan

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 ended the North-South civil war in Sudan that had lasted for two decades. Although it was a fragile agreement and came under threat on a number of occasions, it was a remarkable achievement after previous attempts to end the conflict had failed. One of the hallmarks of the process that culminated in the signing of the CPA was its iterative approach. Before the eventual signing of the CPA in January 2005, several intermediate steps occurred: the signing of the Declaration of Principles proposed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (prepared in 1994 and signed in 1997); the Machakos Protocol in 2002, which established the overall six-year framework for the CPA; and six further protocols in 2003 and 2004 on issues such as wealth sharing and the resolution of the Abyei conflict.²² Thus, a six-year road map was developed that

²⁰ The fact that the DDDC was associated with the DPA also meant that rebel movements that are nonsignatories to the DPA have not engaged. Thus the DDDC's consultation has been partial, not comprehensive.

²¹ For a discussion on incorporating natural resource issues in peace processes and resulting peace agreements, see Marcia A. Dawes, "Considerations for Determining When to Include Natural Resources in Peace Agreements Ending Internal Armed Conflicts," in this book.

²² For a discussion of Sudan's North-South peace process, see Salman (2013).

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included a census, elections, and the referendum on secession in January 2011 that led to the creation of the new state of South Sudan in July 2011. This extended approach contrasts starkly with the deadline diplomacy repeatedly applied to Darfur.

One of the failings of the CPA, however, was the fact that it was not politically comprehensive. Although it proposed a political solution to power sharing and wealth sharing between the North and South, it did not address political representation and power sharing for other peripheral regions of Sudan such as Darfur and the eastern states. It was not a coincidence that the Darfur insurgency erupted when signing of the CPA was imminent (ICG 2004).

Similarly, the CPA deliberately did not resolve land issues, even though—as in Darfur—land issues were at the root of the conflict in many areas, including the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Instead, these were to be addressed in the post-agreement phase, as with the DPA. Four land commissions were to be set up: nationally, for southern Sudan, South Kordofan State, and Blue Nile State, respectively (Egemi 2006). Implementation was dangerously slow. Eight years after the CPA was signed, land commissions had still not been established in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, nor was the national land commission operational, although land disputes were rife and increasingly tense.

The experience of urbanization in southern Sudan since the signing of the CPA is relevant to Darfur. Processes of urbanization that began during the civil war through displacement accelerated when peace was restored, but with little planning or preparedness. This put great pressure on land, services, and the economy. Dealing successfully with these pressures is critical for sustaining peace (Pantuliano et al. 2008).

Southern Sudan (and now South Sudan, especially during 2014), as well as other places in Sudan, provide a reminder of how outbreaks of violence and conflict can continue even after a peace agreement has been signed, and of the region's high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and drought.

The implications for Darfur

What do the DPA and CPA imply for current and future attempts to build peace in Darfur? There are three key implications.

First, the peace process must be a well-informed and iterative approach. Much ground still has to be covered before meaningful negotiations can take place, not least some of the rebel movements must find a way of working toward a common agenda.

Second, developing a vision of a “new Darfur” that can emerge from years of violent and bitter conflict must be part of this iterative process, and it must take account of how the human geography of Darfur has changed during the conflict and how it is likely to continue to change once a durable peace is secured—that is, with a much more urbanized population requiring a more urbanized economy (Buchanan-Smith and McElhinney 2011).

Third, land and environmental governance issues that are at the heart of the conflict must take center stage in the negotiations, not be relegated to the post-peace agreement phase that carries a high risk of continuous deferment and resurgence of violence. This requires both technical work to develop and trial new forms of environmental governance with line ministries and communities, and political dialogue to review and endorse new forms of governance through negotiation (UNEP 2014b). Key issues to be addressed include:

- Clarifying the roles of the state, native administration, and the new political leadership that is emerging through the conflict, to create a functional form of local governance that is rooted in and accountable to local communities.
- Developing the principles for a workable and equitable system of land tenure that takes account of both customary land tenure (favored by ethnic groups that already have allocated land) and statutory land tenure systems, yet addressing the contradictions between the two, which the DPA failed to achieve (Tubiana 2007).
- Demarcating pastoralist migration routes, taking account of competing access to land by pastoralists and farmers, and putting in place a peaceful dispute resolution mechanism.

Addressing these three issues must be done through a consultative process involving key stakeholders, which was missing in the DPA (Egemi 2006). The results will set the foundation for future environmental governance in Darfur, which must be appropriate to a more urbanized settlement pattern that ensures the sustainable use of natural resources such as water and forest resources around urban areas. Environmental governance must also be sufficiently robust to withstand acute pressure and competing demands on natural resources in rural areas during drought years in Darfur, and provide a framework for addressing long-term environmental and livelihood issues associated with climate change. This is a tall order, and it will take time to achieve. The careful and painstaking processes that underpin traditional conflict resolution in Darfur are salutary in this respect (UNEP 2014a).

But the short-term costs of delaying resolution until these issues have been resolved will pay off in the long term by addressing some of the root causes of the conflict and thus increasing the chance of achieving peaceful and equitable environmental governance in Darfur that promotes the sustainable management of natural resources. The experience of the failed DPA with its false urgency to meet deadline diplomacy is testimony to this conclusion, as is the experience after the CPA, when unresolved land issues continued to fester in both northern and southern Sudan.

Implications for international organizations: A new approach to humanitarian programming in Darfur

At the time of writing, the prospect of peace in Darfur is still a long way off. There is not even a clear road map to guide the kind of iterative process proposed

above. The reality is that the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Darfur are likely to continue for some time to come, requiring ongoing interventions from both national and international humanitarian agencies. This is the reality with which the international community must come to terms. Frustrated by the lack of progress toward peace on the political front, donor governments are growing weary of funding continued humanitarian programming. The government of Sudan is impatient to see IDPs return home. But until the conflict is resolved at all levels (and in particular disputed land issues), security in many rural areas is unlikely to improve, meaning that large-scale voluntary return for the majority of IDPs is highly unlikely.

Neither long-term humanitarian programming nor short-term emergency interventions should prevail as the central paradigm. Instead, there must be a dual approach to humanitarian action that responds simultaneously to short-term emergency needs and works toward a longer-term planning horizon and engages with the transitions taking place in society (UN 2010). It is only by including the transitions and carrying out long-term planning that humanitarian action can contribute to laying the foundations for peace and recovery. The reason for continuing to call it humanitarian action is to draw attention to the importance of implementing programs according to humanitarian principles. The term *humanitarian* should not be equated with short-term responses; it should be defined by principle rather than time frame. The principles of impartiality and independence are particularly important to ensure that humanitarian programming engages with the needs of all vulnerable groups and that vulnerability is understood within a longer perspective, as Helen Young and her colleagues have urged in relation to pastoralist communities (Young et al. 2009). This requires the humanitarian community to do several things:

- *Sharpen its contextual analysis.* It is striking that so few humanitarian agencies invest in this sort of wider analysis. These analyses should form the basis for a more nuanced, evidence-based strategic response. For example, there needs to be better take-up of the recommendations made in analytical work such as that of the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission, as well as research undertaken by organizations such as Tufts University, UNEP, the Overseas Development Institute, and Tearfund. This broader view can be supported by strengthening institutional memory so that new international staff are aware of research and analyses undertaken by their predecessors.
- *Strengthen strategic programming that includes both near-term and long-term planning horizons.* Analysis of long-term trends should have a profound impact on programming. Darfur is facing rapid population growth and increased urbanization, which in turn demand a new vision of economic development; it is also facing transition in the face of climate change. The impact of these trends needs to be built into the design of humanitarian programs concurrently with efforts to address short-term life-saving needs. For example, livelihood support to reduce vulnerability during conflict should also facilitate adaptation

to climate change over an extended period. This is a challenging but critical agenda that demands planning and coordination skills that take into account longer time frames.

- *Pay more attention in humanitarian programming to the PIPs that affect livelihoods, rather than focusing predominantly on assets (and hence relief distribution).* This also requires different kinds of analytical and planning skills, especially strategic leadership.

If these three steps are taken, it is much more likely that humanitarian programming will address long-term livelihood issues that set the foundation for Darfur's future. For example, support to livelihoods in urban areas could focus on adding value to Darfur's agricultural and livestock products through processing, thus developing a livelihood strategy that is an alternative to the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources such as timber.²³ For instance, finding ways of processing perishable fruit that is transported from the Jebel Marra area (Darfur's main source of fruit and vegetables) to Nyala, one of Darfur's major markets, could create employment opportunities for IDPs and the urban poor in Nyala, thus supporting an industry with a long-term peacetime potential (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul 2008). If the three steps outlined above are taken, it is much more likely that environmental considerations will be incorporated into humanitarian programming—in other words, that externalities will be identified and addressed, using UNEP's proposed approach to (UNEP 2009, 2012):

1. *Contextualize* the intervention. Environmental impacts are highly context specific. An umbrella assessment can provide guidance for individual projects.²⁴
2. *Assess* programs for potential negative environmental impacts.
3. *Mitigate* those impacts by modifying the program design, or compensating for negative impacts.
4. *Enhance* environmental benefits by extending the mitigation measures to bring net positive benefits, and extending components of the work that benefit the environment.

Such an approach does not mean that relief distribution of food aid and shelter materials should stop. As long as the conflict continues, they will be needed both to meet immediate emergency needs as waves of displacement

²³ For more information on adding value to natural resource extraction in conflict-affected countries, see Matthew Wilburn King, Marco Antonio González Pastora, Mauricio Castro Salazar, and Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, "Environmental Governance and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Central America: Lessons from the Central American Commission for Environment and Development," in this book.

²⁴ For an appropriate model of an umbrella assessment that balances accessibility to nontechnical readers with adequate environmental analysis, see Tearfund (2007a). This model enabled a significant change in practice for implementing organizations.

continue and to serve as long-term support for those who are unable to pursue their pre-conflict livelihood strategies. But it does encourage different kinds of programming—for example, support to government technical departments that are struggling to respond to changes in Darfur's human geography. A case in point is the Urban Water Corporation in towns with swollen populations such as Nyala, El Fasher, and Geneina.²⁵

This approach also encourages environmentally sustainable ways of providing humanitarian assistance, such as using stabilized soil blocks in building rather than fired bricks (firing bricks contributes substantially to deforestation, which is devastating in the semiarid region). And it encourages humanitarian agencies to engage with natural resource issues. If they do, during the conflict they can sow and nurture the seeds that will contribute to sustainable and equitable management of natural resources in the future.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of Darfur's conflict is not unique. Competition over natural resources is rarely the sole explanation for a conflict. Whether competing access to land and water results in violence has a lot to do with the prevailing political and institutional context, and above all with the nature and effectiveness of the governance structures in place to mediate competing demands. Darfur is a reminder of how conflicts have to be understood as multidimensional and occurring at different but interrelated levels: local, national, and international.

It is also rare that a conflict-related humanitarian crisis is short-lived. Experiences in many countries in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere show that conflict is more likely to become protracted, as Darfur's has become. This raises the important question of what can be done on the ground during conflict to prepare for a sustainable peace. This question is often avoided, particularly by the international humanitarian community, which tends to focus on meeting immediate needs in their short planning and programming horizons. But fundamental long-term processes can be both triggered and accelerated by the conflict itself. In Darfur, these processes include accelerated environmental degradation around the main towns, and the extraordinary transition that is taking place in settlement patterns as all Darfur's states experience rapid and distorted urbanization.

Experiences from other regions that have been subjected to prolonged conflict indicate that these processes are unlikely to be reversed when peace arrives. The challenge for the international humanitarian community is to learn how both to

²⁵ Although some international humanitarian agencies have been reluctant to engage with government ministries for fear of compromising their principles or undermining their independence, it is interesting to note that the International Committee of the Red Cross, the international agency that is probably the most rigorous and consistent in its adherence to humanitarian principles, has been one of the few that has engaged with the state water corporations in Darfur (Collinson, Buchanan-Smith, and Elhawary 2009).

address these processes and transitions during the crisis and to support the development of a shared vision for the post-conflict future. To do so requires that the dominant humanitarian paradigm takes a dual approach that engages with both short-term and long-term planning horizons, guided by humanitarian principles in both endeavours. This in turn requires a shift in culture, in planning, and in funding timescales to ensure that humanitarian action can better contribute to laying the foundations for peace and recovery.

One of Darfur's most critical needs as it adapts to the processes of population growth, urbanization, climate change, and conflict is in its endeavour to create sustainable and equitable forms of environmental governance. This will be essential to Darfur's future and should be part of any peace agreement. Steps can be taken now to address this need—for example, through humanitarian programming that works with all sides in the conflict and pays attention to local management and governance mechanisms. But it also implies a more iterative approach to the negotiations that will eventually deliver a successful peace agreement, drawing on the experience of negotiating the CPA that ended the North-South civil war, but also learning from the gaps in the CPA, particularly relating to land and other natural resource management issues that have been at the heart of both the conflict in Darfur and the North-South civil war (with South Sudan).

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